



Constitution and General Purposes Committee

4 October 2021

Title	Member Development Programme 2018 – 2022 Update and Draft Member Development Programme 2022-2026
Report of	Head of Governance
Wards	All Wards
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix A – Delivered Sessions for Member Development Programme from April 2021. Appendix B – Member Development Planned Sessions Appendix C – Draft Member Development and Induction Programme 2022 - 2026
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Summary

To support councillors to be effective in their various roles, it is essential that the Council has in place a comprehensive programme of briefings and other development activity. Since the 2018 Local Elections, the Council have taken a more structured approach towards Member Development and Induction. With input and support from Members and Officers, a programme of induction and development activity was developed and approved by the (then) General Functions Committee in March 2018.

Since then the Governance Service has coordinated and rolled out a programme of development covering a variety of Councillor responsibilities. The details of the sessions completed since the last report to this Committee are set out at Appendix A.

Planned activity for the forthcoming period is set out in Appendix B.

Appendix C details proposals for the May 2022 post-election induction of new and returning Members and, in addition, provides an overarching strategic framework to Member Development for the next administration from May 2022 – April 2026.

Officers Recommendations

- 1. That the Committee note the sessions delivered since April 2021 as set out in Appendix A and provide feedback on sessions delivered to date.**
- 2. That the Committee agree the forward plan of Member Development sessions as set out in Appendix B.**
- 3. That the Committee review and approve the Draft Member Development and Induction Programme for 2022 to 2026 as set out in Appendix C.**
- 4. That the Committee note that following the agreement of the Member Development and Induction Programme 2022 to 2026 that officers will commence work on assessment for Charter+ (Plus) status in Q2 2022/23.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Councillors are responsible for setting the overall policy direction of the Council and overseeing the delivery of a range of services, many of which are complex or have a statutory basis. Expectations of councillors by residents are high – they want their Council to deliver high quality services and respond quickly to changing demands all within ever increasing financial constraints. To be effective councillors need to be able to:
 - Represent the views of their political party and constituents;
 - Contribute to the good governance of the Council;
 - Understand local government and the legal framework that it operates within; and
 - Be knowledgeable about local policy, services and communities.
- 1.2 In addition to serving on Council and committees, councillors may also be appointed to a range of outside bodies which have their own governance arrangements (e.g. school governing bodies, community organisations, charities, trusts, companies, etc).
- 1.3 To ensure that councillors are supported to be as effective as possible in their various roles, a comprehensive Member Development Programme was developed and agreed by the (then) General Functions Committee in March 2018. In accordance with the decision of the Committee, a comprehensive induction programme for new and returning Members was delivered following the local election in May 2018. Additionally, numerous development sessions and training opportunities have been provided from 2018 to date. These have

been regularly reported to the Constitution and General Purposes Committee for Member oversight. Details of the sessions completed since the last report to Committee (in April 2021) are set out in Appendix A.

- 1.4 Since the last meeting of the committee officers have been working on the draft Member Development and Induction Programme for the new and returning Members for the period May 2022 to May 2026 (Appendix C). Officers have engaged with council directors and the Member Development Steering Group in the developing the proposals and detailed plans for the 2022 to 2026 Development and Induction Programme. Feedback from elected Members and officers has been incorporated into the draft proposals and the Committee is now asked to review and approve the draft Member Development and Induction Programme for 2022 to 2026.
- 1.5 The Committee is asked to note that the draft proposals:
 - Contains many elements from 2018 – 2022, but takes into account feedback received from Members, officers and the Charter Status assessors;
 - Identifies if training is mandatory, required, recommended, or optional and that the Committee is requested to approve the status of each session by approving the programme; *Note: The Committee are requested to note that there are no formal sanctions available if Members do not attend sessions prescribed as mandatory/required other than via the Political Groups.*
 - Seeks to achieve a balance of in-house vs. external delivery; and
 - Seeks to have flexible approaches to session delivery which improve accessibility for Members including face-to-face, online (with an option to record and watch back), e-learning, written briefings, etc.
- 1.6 The purpose of the Member Development and Induction Programme is to ensure:
 - Sessions meet identified training and development needs and supports them to be effective councillors;
 - There are clear expectations of Members in relation to training and development;
 - Sessions are commissioned well in advance; and
 - There is an understanding from Members about which sessions are mandatory, which are recommended and which are optional.
- 1.7 As such, Member buy-in for the Programme is essential in ensuring that it meets their training and development needs and supports them to be effective councillors. To ensure that the Programme is Member-led, the Member Development Steering Group, which meets regularly and is made up of the Party Group Leaders, the Group Whips and Political Assistants, has been consulted on the draft proposals.
- 1.8 As previously reported officers have been working towards having the Programme externally accredited via the Charter for Member Development. Our Programme was assessed in January 2021 and the Council was awarded

Charter Status. Since then, the Governance Service have been working to deliver the areas of improvement identified and prepare for re-assessment in 18 months' time. The Committee is therefore asked to note that that officers will commence work on assessment for Charter+ (Plus) status in Q2 2022/23.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To ensure that Members have appropriate knowledge and skills to discharge their various roles as a councillor including taking decisions, monitoring the Council's work, acting as a corporate parent and managing casework.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The Committee could choose not to develop and implement a Member Development and Induction Programme. This approach is not recommended as it could leave the Council at risk of some decisions being successfully appealed by judicial review or other appeal mechanisms (e.g. Planning Inspectorate). In addition, failing to develop and deliver a Development Programme could result in Members serving on committees or other bodies when they do not have the requisite knowledge and skills to be effective (e.g. treasury management, pensions, etc).

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Officers will work on the finalising a comprehensive Member Development programme for the period 2022 – 2026 which will include a post-election induction plan.
- 4.2 Officers will also work on addressing areas of improvement as identified by South East Employers following our assessment for Charter Status. Progress on addressing these areas will be reported to the Member Development Steering Group for Member oversight.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 Providing a framework to enable Members to be effective councillors supports delivery of all Corporate Plan priorities as set out in the Barnet Plan 2021 - 2025.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.1 As part of the Member Allowances budget, a proportion (£22,500) is available to support Member Development.

5.3 Social Value

- 5.3.1 N/A

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.4.1 Council Constitution, Article 7 (Committees, Sub-Committees, Forums and Working Groups and Partnerships) – the Constitution and General Purposes Committee has specific responsibility for Member Development.

5.5 Risk Management

- 5.5.1 As set out in section 3.1 above. Furthermore, not engaging the Committee in the development of the programme would risk Members not being able to shape their own development.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.6.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010 advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups and foster good relations between people from different groups.

- 5.6.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day-to-day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

- 5.6.3 It is proposed that a specific module on equalities is delivered as part of the Programme which will include: unconscious bias; and the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010.

5.7 Corporate Parenting

- 5.7.1 Councillors are corporate parents to looked after children and children in care. In recognition of the seriousness of this responsibility, the Programme includes mandatory sessions for all Members on corporate parenting and safeguarding children in order that Members are clear on their duties and obligations in this regard.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.8.1 Councillors, Chief Officers, senior managers and political groups have been consulted on the Member Development Programme and comments and amendments made have been considered in the drafting and delivery of the programme.

5.8 Insight

- 5.8.1 N/A

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 General Functions Committee, 19 March 2018, Item 7 (Member Development Programme):

<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=9287&Ver=4>

- 6.2 Constitution & General Purposes Committee, 22 October 2018, Item 12 (Member Development Programme):
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=9502&Ver=4>
- 6.3 Constitution & General Purposes Committee, 7 October 2019, Item 9 (Member Development Programme):
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=9855&Ver=4>
- 6.4 Constitution & General Purposes Committee, 12 October 2020, Item 12 (Member Development Programme):
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=10215&Ver=4>